



RCB SPIRITUAL FORMATION GUIDE | APRIL 2023

An introduction to *Slow. Steady. Faith.* These guides are designed to help you take **the next small step** toward spiritual flourishing. When it comes to growth in our walks with God, many of us get stuck because we don't know where to start, we struggle to make space for life-giving practices amid our busyness, or we set ambitious goals that are too hard to follow through on in our current season of life.

The heart behind *Slow. Steady. Faith.* is to **focus on and celebrate taking small steps toward God**—by seeking His presence, imitating His character, and mirroring His love and goodness to those around us.

As you read this month's guide, ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate **the practice** (what to do) and **the rhythm** (when and how often to do it) that will be most helpful to you. Remember, these practices are not rungs on a ladder where the goal is to climb higher by doing "more." Rather, they are meant to be simple ways to shape your life so that God is increasingly placed at the center. This means that in a busy season a once-a-month practice can provide as much value as a daily practice might in a more spacious season—the Holy Spirit can use either to infuse more of God's abundant life into your life.

To make the most of this guide, set aside time at the start of each month to pray over these questions:

- ❖ **Which practice is standing out to me?** How might God be answering a prayer or calling me into a deeper relationship with Him by inviting me into this practice?
- ❖ **How can I make this practice part of my everyday life?** Are there steps of preparation I need to take to clear time and space for this? Do I already have a regular rhythm that I can incorporate this practice into?
- ❖ **What does it look like to take *slow, steady steps* toward this practice?** During a busy or emotionally weighty season, you may want to make the practice "smaller"—for instance, instead of a daily rhythm, consider twice a week. During a spacious or growth-oriented season, you may want to pick a practice/ rhythm that will stretch you by devoting more of your time, energy, or resources to it—for instance, instead of setting aside 15 minutes for a practice, try 30 or 45.

Remember to make prayer a part of every practice. Some guides will focus more on our personal relationship with God while others will call us to engage more with our community. Approach each practice as an invitation to draw near to God and lift up words of praise, petition, repentance, and thanksgiving as you go.

Lastly, remember that God celebrates the small and faithful (Mark 12:41-44). By taking the next small step that is within reach today, you are planting a seed of faith, trusting God to nourish it and cause it to expand and flourish (Luke 13:18-19). As we engage in these practices, may Jesus be glorified and may we find that when we draw near to God, He is faithful to meet us there (James 4:8).

Creating Space for... Celebration and Gratitude



As Lent comes to a close and we enter into the season of Eastertide, we will focus on “creating space” for practices that reflect the newness of life we’ve received through the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus.

In April, we will focus on **celebration** and **gratitude**. The *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* defines these concepts like this: Celebration is a way of engaging in actions that orient the spirit toward worship, praise, and thanksgiving. This may include time spent with others, sharing meals, working, serving, worshiping, laughing, listening to music, dancing, and so on. Gratitude is a loving and thankful response toward God for his presence with us and within this world. Though “blessings” can move us into gratitude, it is not at the root of a thankful heart. Delight in God and in his good will is the heartbeat of thankfulness.



Practice: Designate a period of time where you fast from meals or a specific spending habit. Keep track of the money you save and prayerfully consider how you can use it to be generous to others.

Rhythm: Pick one day each week to fast from meals (or a single meal) or choose a spending habit to set aside on specific days or even the whole month (buying lunch out, buying coffee, paying for streaming subscriptions/entertainment, etc).



Celebration | Attend to the people and places that give you joy

- ❖ Identify the place you most readily connect with God. Is it in nature? Listening to Christian music? Participating in corporate worship? Solitude? Go to that place. What do you want to tell God about the joy you receive there?
- ❖ Attend to the people who give you joy. Ask God how you might celebrate them in a way that encourages them and reminds them of how precious they are to you and to God.



Gratitude | Practice noticing the abundance God has brought into your life

- ❖ Begin a gratitude journal by keeping a record of the “abundances” God has given you. Next to each abundance write what it means to you to have a God who interacts and intervenes in your life. Notice what you have been given that you did not deserve. What do you want to say to God about these things?
- ❖ Write a letter of thanks to someone who has touched your life in the past year, the past month, and the past week. Honor these people with a thank-you.



Reflection Questions | Use the prompts below to discover what helps you to celebrate and be grateful

Celebration

- ❖ Where are you most prone to celebrate God? Alone? With others? In worship? In music? In nature? What does that tell you about how God made you and how you most naturally meet with him?
- ❖ How is your celebration enhanced or curtailed by your ability to remember the past, live in the moment, or anticipate the future?

Gratitude

- ❖ When have you found that in retrospect you could have been thankful for something that you were not grateful for at the time it was happening? How can this inform your perspective now?
- ❖ How has a grateful person affected your own vision of what matters in life? How has someone who lives out of bitterness affected your life?